

1 KINGS

1 KINGS 1-2 — THE CORONATION OF SOLOMON

THE OCCASION FOR SOLOMON'S CORONATION (1:10)

The incident in the first four verses is recorded not for itself, but because of what grew out of it in Adonijah's case (2:13-25). It was a custom in the Orient, and still is, to do this for hygienic reasons on the supposition "that the inhalation of young breath will give new vigor to a worn-out frame." The event shows that Abishag was made a concubine or secondary wife to the king (2:22).

Adonijah, doubtless, felt some justification for his conduct in that he was now the eldest son of David (^{<1034>}2 Samuel 3:4), and no public intimation had been made as to the successor on the throne. Moreover, his father seems to have indulged him in certain liberties (v. 6).

For the history of Zadok and Benaiah, see ^{<1087>}2 Samuel 8:17; 15:24; 21:53 and 8:18; 20:23. With Nathan we have met (^{<1070>}2 Samuel 7). There was something ominous in the omission of these men from Adonijah's feast (v. 10).

THE WAY OF PROCEDURE (1:11-40)

Bathsheba was a capable woman, for it is inferred from verse 17 that she had great influence with the king. Nathan must have known of the promise spoken of and been aware of its harmony with the divine will to explain his action (vv. 11-27).

THE EARLIEST RESULTS (1:41-2:46)

Adonijah (1:50-53, 2:13-25). The four corners of the altar of burnt offering to which sacrifices were bound, were symbols of salvation and considered as a sanctuary for all except certain classes of offenders (^{<1214>}Exodus 21:14). Adonijah's offense was rebellion, but he is spared on the conditions named. Unhappily, however, he violates them and,

apparently instigated by Joab and Abiathar (v. 22), adopts a course which, according to eastern ideas, was of dangerous consequence to the state.

Abiathar (vv. 26-27). The punishment of the priest follows that of the usurper. (Note the fulfillment of ^{<0121>}1 Samuel 2:30.)

Joab (vv. 28-34). The crimes of this military leader merited death, according to the divine law (^{<0533>}Numbers 35:33), which would have been visited upon him earlier, no doubt, had it not been for his power with the army. Compare David's words in ^{<1033>}2 Samuel 3:28-29.

Shiraei (vv. 36-46). By the death of this man all the leaders of factions inimical to Solomon were cut off, which explains the last sentence of the chapter.

QUESTIONS

1. What relation presumably did Abishag sustain to David?
2. Had Adonijah any apparent ground for his action?
3. What shows a plot in his case?
4. How does ^{<1015>}1 Kings 1:15-31 indicate the dignity associated with the human sovereignty of Israel at this time?
5. How did Adonijah show his heart unchanged?
6. In what line of the priesthood did Abiathar come?
7. In what sense did Solomon's kingdom come to be established at this period?

1 KINGS 3-5 — SOLOMON'S GREATNESS AND WISDOM

HIS EGYPTIAN ALLIANCE (3:1-4)

It is disappointing at the beginning to speak of that which betokens neither greatness nor wisdom on Solomon's part, looking at it from the highest point of view. This marriage with a heathen wife was contrary to the law of God (^{<0346>}Exodus 34:16); and while it was entered into for political reasons, and to strengthen Israel's hands, yet in the end it weakened them, as Israel came to trust in Pharaoh more than Jehovah.

And yet Solomon loved the Lord, and served Him with the limitations named in these verses, and the Lord was longsuffering toward him as with his father David.

Some think that since Solomon was not divinely rebuked for marrying this princess, as he was later for marrying other foreigners, she may have consented to become a proselyte to the Jewish religion. It is interesting also that the Song of Songs and ^{<BIB>}Psalm 45 were probably composed in her honor, although both, in the mind of the Holy Spirit, had a typical reference to the relation of Jehovah to Israel, or Christ to His Church, or both.

The "high places" in verse 2, were altars erected on natural or artificial eminences, on the theory that the worshipper was thus brought nearer the Deity. They had been prohibited by Moses because of their association with idolatry (^{<BIB>}Leviticus 17:3-4, etc.); but, as the temple was not yet built in Israel and the tabernacle was moved about from place to place, they seem to have been tolerated without special rebuke from God.

HIS NOBLE REQUEST (3:5-15)

Observe that the wisdom Solomon desired was not of the heavenly but the earthly kind (v. 9). Noble it was, and yet Solomon might have had something still more worth while had he sought it. How does God's answer illustrate ^{<BIB>}Ephesians 3:20?

Solomon's expression "I am but a little child" (v. 7) is not to be taken in the sense of years but experience. He was probably twenty at this period.

HIS STATE AND RETINUE (4:1-28)

How do verses 11 and 15 indicate that this chapter is dealing with a later period in Solomon's reign?

Observe the development of the kingdom at this time as indicated by these officials. The word "priest" (v. 2), it is thought, should be rendered "prince," so that Azariah was probably prime minister; then follow three secretaries of state, a historiographer, a military commander in chief, a high priest, provincial governors, a confidential adviser, a steward or chamberlain, a state treasurer or collector of customs, etc. (vv. 2-6).

Afterward local revenue officers are named, for the taxes raised were in the products of the soil rather than money. These were put in store cities in the different localities until required at the palace (vv. 7-21). Compare ~~1009~~1 Kings 9:19.

The "provision" in verses 22-23 refers to the tables of the king's concubines, courtiers, guests, etc., as well as his private board.

HIS FAME (4:28-34)

This exceeded that of the Chaldeans or Persians, or Egyptians, renowned as the last named were for all kinds of learning (v. 30). There were none of his contemporaries he did not excel (v. 31). He was author of wise sayings and songs by the thousands (v. 32). He was a master of forestry and arboriculture, of zoology, and ornithology and ichthology, so that kings as well as lesser people came to listen to and confer with him.

HIS FRIENDS (CHAP. 5)

Among the kings who came to pay court was Hiram of Tyre, who, whether he was the Hiram of David's time, or his son or grandson, it is difficult to say. This results in a contract for the building of the temple, in which the skilled workmen of Tyre are yoked with the commoner laborers of Israel (v. 6). Advantages are to be reciprocated (v. 9). Compare chapter 9:20 (also ~~427~~2 Chronicles 2:17-18 and 8:7-9), from which we gather who were the laborers Solomon laid tribute upon for this work. The stones in verses 17-18 are still seen in the lower foundations of the site of the ancient temple.

QUESTIONS

1. Have you read ~~951~~Psalm 45?
2. What does the Song of Songs typify?
3. Why were altars built on high places?
4. Quote ~~408~~Ephesians 3:30.
5. Name from memory the offices in Solomon's kingdom.
6. Name some of the branches of Solomon's learning.
7. For what arts or trades were the Phoenicians (or Tyrians) noted?
8. What do you recall of the dealings between Hiram and David?

1 KINGS 6-7 — BUILDING THE TEMPLE

THE WORK IN OUTLINE (6:1-14)

Note the particularities as to date, dimensions and general appearance (vv. 1-4), on which space will not permit extended comment. As to the size of the cubit, the question as to whether the elevation is external or internal, the description and purpose of the windows, for example, students must be referred to Bible dictionaries.

The chambers (vv. 5-10) on three sides of the temple seem to have been three stories high, each wider than that beneath it, with a winding stairway on the interior leading to the middle and upper stories.

Travelers speak of a quarry near Jerusalem from which the stones are likely to have come. There is evidence too, that they were dressed there as the text says (v. 7), for other stones like them in size and substance are found in the remains.

The communication of the Lord to Solomon is significant of encouragement and warning. When He speaks of dwelling among His people it has the same meaning as when He used the words in the wilderness. The visible glory resting over the mercy seat in the most holy place was the token of His presence. It remained there while the nation served Him, and that meant that He was protecting and blessing them.

THE DETAILS (6:15-38)

Verse 15 reveals that the walls were sheathed with cedar and the floor planked with fir or cypress; thus the stone was entirely hidden. The walls were carved in relief with foliage and flowers (v. 18) and cherubim and palm trees (v. 29). But the whole was overlaid with gold (v. 22).

Comparing the first and last verses of the chapter, how long was the temple in building? In round numbers how does the last verse reckon it?

SOLOMON'S OWN PALACE (7:1-12)

Perhaps the longer time occupied in building this is explained by the fact that its completion was not so urgent or important as the temple, and that the same preparation for it had not been made in advance (v. 1).

In the Revised Version verse 2 begins: "For he built the house of the forest of Lebanon." This indicates that it is still his own house which is referred to, the material for which came from the same locality as that for the temple.

The edifice seems to have been oblong (v. 2), with a front porch used as a judgment hall (vv. 6-7). There was also a large hall in the center, on one side of which were the king's apartments and on the other those of the queen (v. 8). Compare ^{<1718B>}Esther 2:3, 9.

The phrase in verse 12, "the inner court of the house of the Lord," should read as in the Revised Version, "like as the inner court," etc. The meaning is that, in the palace as in the temple, the same rows of hewn stones and cedar beams formed the wall.

THE FOREIGN CRAFTSMAN AND HIS WORK (7:13-51)

This "Hiram" was not the king of Tyre, but another man of that country by the same name, and evidently a genius in metal work (v. 14).

Tyrians and other Pheonicians were not only great workers in timber (v. 6), but renowned the world over for the art in which he so greatly excelled.

But Hiram had Jewish blood in him too (v. 14). Here he is said to be of the tribe of Naphtali on his mother's side, while ^{<1424>}2 Chronicles 2:14 speaks of her as of Dan; but she may have belonged to the first named while living in Dan.

Hiram's work consisted, first, of the pillars of the temple and their capitols, the latter beautifully ornamented, and which were named as they were set up (vv. 15-22).

Next came the "molten sea" (vv. 23-26), which was not the same as the brazen laver of the tabernacle, as will be seen by comparing ^{<1424>}2 Chronicles 4:1-6, especially verse 6.

Then "the ten bases of brass" (vv. 27-39), which, according to verse 38, were for the support of the brazen layers. And these in turn were for the washing of the sacrifices (see 2 Chronicles 1, as above).

Hiram also made what other things (v. 40)? What locality was selected for the furnaces, and why? (For answer to the last half of this question

compare the margin with the text of the verse.) The reference here is to bronze rather than what we know as brass.

Observe in verse 51 that in addition to the furnishings which Solomon made for the temple and which were modeled after those in the tabernacle of the wilderness, he also deposited therein the sacred articles "which David his father had dedicated," though they probably were not used.

QUESTIONS

1. What archaeological evidence is born to the historical character of this narrative?
2. How does God encourage and warn Solomon?
3. Why may a longer period have been taken in building the palace than the temple?
4. For what were the people on the north of Palestine noted?
5. How would you harmonize verse 14 with the corresponding reference in 2 Chronicles?
6. What do the names Jachin and Boaz mean?
7. For what use was the molten sea?

1 KINGS 8-9 — DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

THE TIME (8:1-2)

Since the temple was completed in the eighth month of the previous year (6:38) and not dedicated until the seventh of the following, how shall we explain the interval? The reason usually assigned is that the king waited for the feast of tabernacles in the fall when one of the greatest assemblies took place, and for this purpose the most appropriate.

THE GRAND PROCESSION (8:3-9)

Observe who were the leading actors (v. 3). Also what articles they carried (v. 4). The "tabernacle" means the old tabernacle of the wilderness, which had been located at Gibeon and was now to be preserved in the temple at Jerusalem.

Notice the sacrificing on the march (v. 5). Notice that it was the original ark of the covenant that was placed in the most holy place of the temple (v. 6). "The wings of the cherubim" mean those that Solomon caused to be placed there, and larger than those of Moses' time which were firmly attached to the ark itself (^{<0270>}Exodus 37:7-8). The staves at the end of the ark were drawn out to be seen in the holy place, but not beyond it (v. 8). This was to guide the high priest on the day of atonement, that he might be able to enter the most holy place in the thick darkness (^{<0255>}Exodus 25:15).

Note what the ark contained (v. 9), and compare ^{<3094>}Hebrews 9:4. This last Scripture should be understood as teaching that the things it names were placed by and not in the ark (see ^{<0163>}Exodus 16:33; ^{<0470>}Numbers 17:10).

THE DIVINE ACCEPTANCE OF THE WORK (8:10-11)

It is only necessary to compare these verses with ^{<0484>}Exodus 40:34, to see the significance of this act of Jehovah. He thus established Himself in Israel and took His seat on the throne of His glory. What satisfaction it must have brought to Solomon, and indeed all the faithful in Israel. What a reward for their endeavors! Oh, if they had only been faithful thereafter, that the Lord might never have departed from them! What a different story this world would have had to tell.

But how glad we should be that that glory is coming back to Israel, and the world is at length to be blessed thereby. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love her (^{<0216>}Psalms 122:6).

SOLOMON'S BLESSING (8:12-21)

Just what is meant by the "thick darkness" (v. 12) is not easy to determine unless it is the cloud and pillar of fire of earlier days which indicated Jehovah's presence. The rest of the words of Solomon's blessing, however, are plain.

THE PRAYER AND BENEDICTION (8:22-61)

For the place where the king stood and knelt see ^{<1483>}2 Chronicles 6:13. How strange that the king should have thus ministered and not the high priest? But it was lawful for him to minister about holy things though he might not minister in them.

After the ascription of praise to Jehovah (vv. 22-30), the prayer contains seven petitions or references to as many occasions when His interposing mercy might be required. Let the student discover them (vv. 31-53).

The chapter closes with an account of the surpassing number of sacrifices presented and the rejoicing of the people for the goodness of God.

JEHOVAH'S RESPONSE (9:1-9)

If the words of this vision are studied carefully they will be found to contain an answer to all Solomon's petitions.

Verses 7-9, however, are a prophecy finding a sad fulfillment in our time because of Israel's unfaithfulness. Their location in the record at this point leads up to the story of the king's worldly ambitions which were the beginning of the nation's decline.

THE COMPENSATION OF THE KING OF TYRE (9:10-14)

For the twenty years that Hiram the king aided Solomon (v. 10), Solomon gave him twenty cities, a city a year. Doubtless they were adjacent to his territory and were those which never had been conquered by Israel and were still inhabited by Canaanites.

These cities being unacceptable to him (vv. 12-13), he was recompensed in some other way, and Solomon took control of them in his own hands and peopled them with Israelites (^{<448P>}2 Chronicles 8:2).

THE LEVY (9:15-25)

The dedication of the temple seems to close at verse 25, which is why the preceding verses about the levy are included in this lesson, though their exact bearing upon it may not appear at first sight. Perhaps the connection is discovered by going back to chapter 5:13 and the following verses.

However, the reason for the levy of both men and money is clear from the many great works Solomon undertook as indicated in this chapter. Observe that the people levied upon (vv. 20-22) were the Canaanites who had not been subdued or exterminated at the conquest. (See ^{<442B>}2 Chronicles 2:18.) As prisoners of war they did the drudgery, while the men of Israel had the more honorable employment.

QUESTIONS

1. At what period of the year did this ceremony occur?
2. What evidence have we that the Mosaic tabernacle had been preserved all this time?
3. Have you read ~~<3004>~~ Hebrews 9:4, and if so, how would you explain it?
4. How did God indicate His acceptance of the work?
5. Memorize ~~<1071>~~ Psalm 122.
6. How would you explain the ministering of the king on this occasion?
7. Name the subjects of the seven petitions of Solomon's prayer.
8. Why did Solomon make levies of men and money at this time?
9. Who were especially levied upon and why?
10. With what general statement of Solomon's religious spirit does the lesson close?

1 KINGS 9:26-11:43 — CLOSE OF SOLOMON'S REIGN

WISDOM AND WEALTH (9:26-10:29)

A look at a map in the back of your Bible may identify the locality of verse 26, whence Solomon, with Hiram's help, extended his influence by sea. Ophir (v. 28) has been regarded as a general name for all the southern territory in the neighborhood of the inland seas. A "talent" is not easy to estimate but, on the supposition of some that a talent of gold represented about \$30,000, we have here a contribution of between \$12,000,000 and \$14,000,000. In our clay not so much, but in that day a tremendous fortune.

One result of expansion by the sea was the visitors it brought, as illustrated by the Queen of Sheba, whose country cannot be identified except in a general way as indicated by our Lord (~~<1022>~~ Matthew 12:42; ~~<1131>~~ Luke 11:31). A query arises as to whether verse 9 means that she was really converted to Jehovah as the result of what she saw and heard.

The "targets" or shields of verse 16, usually made of wood and covered with leather, were weapons of defense for the palace. (See 14:26.)

"Tarshish" (v. 22) is a general term for the west, as Ophir was for the south, and points to Solomon's commercial ventures across the Mediterranean.

Verse 26 shows him departing from the commandment of God about horses and chariots (^{<15716>}Deuteronomy 17:16), and at a wholesale rate, judging by verses 28 and 29 in the Revised Version.

VOLUPTUOUSNESS AND IDOLATRY (11:1-8)

What had become of Solomon's wisdom? The answer is that the wisdom he had was of the earthly rather than the heavenly kind. It was sufficient to keep the city but not to keep his heart. It helped him rule the kingdom but not his own spirit. Was Solomon really regenerated, who can tell? (Compare ^{<2100>}Proverbs 31:1-3 and ^{<21043>}Ecclesiastes 4:13.)

The princesses were daughters of tributary kings taken as hostages perhaps, or to strengthen Solomon's hands in the political sense; but the concubines were secondary wives not having the same recognition in the kingdom.

Compare ^{<12313>}2 Kings 23:13 for the name given to that part of Olivet on which Solomon built the temples for the false gods. These he had been induced to worship through the influence of his harem. God alone knows what loathsome wickedness this may have introduced into Israel.

CHASTISEMENT AND SORROW (11:9-43)

What aggravated Solomon's offense (vv. 9-10)? What judgment is threatened (v. 11)? But what mercy is shown and why (v. 12)? To what extent was the kingdom to be rent from Solomon (v. 13)? The significance of this is that in the line of David that "greater than Solomon" was to come of whom we learned in ^{<10100>}2 Samuel 11. (Compare also verses 35 and 36.) We shall see later that not only was Judah left to Solomon's son, but Benjamin and Levi as well, three tribes, although here named as one. Many individuals and families in the other tribes in addition stayed with him for religious reasons. (See ^{<11217>}1 Kings 12:17 and ^{<41112>}2 Chronicles 11:12-13.)

Who was the first rod of God's anger raised against Solomon (v. 14)? And the second (vv. 23-25)? And the third (v. 26)?

This last was the most formidable because of the internal commotion he aroused. He came first into notice as a mechanical engineer in charge of some of Solomon's many works (vv. 27-28); but God had chosen him for a higher task, the knowledge of which seems to have turned his head (vv. 29-31). He could not wait patiently for God to remove Solomon as David did in the case of Saul, but began to take matters into his own hand with the consequences in verse 40.

Observe the name of the book of record from which the inspired compiler of 1 Kings may have obtained his data (v. 41), and compare with it the statement in ~~402~~2 Chronicles 9:29.

QUESTIONS

1. Has your Bible any maps?
2. What can you recall of Hiram's history?
3. What two geographic names having a general application are given here?
4. How much value may have been represented by a talent of gold?
5. Have you a copy of the Revised Version?
6. How would you discriminate in the case of Solomon's wisdom?
7. Have you compared the Scripture references in this lesson?
8. What name was given that part of Olivet on which Solomon built the idol temples?
9. Name the three tribes that remained loyal to the house of David?
10. Name the three human scourges of Solomon towards the close of his life.
11. What prophet is named in this lesson?
12. What data may the compiler of Kings have had to draw upon?

1 KINGS 12-14 — EARLY DAUS OF TWO KINGDOMS

CAUSE OF THE DIVISION (12:1-25)

Verses 2-4 look as though there were a preconcerted purpose to revolt, and yet who can tell what a different history might have followed had the new king heeded wiser counsel?

Note the reason of the protest, which was not Solomon's idolatry and the heathenism he introduced, but their financial burdens; their civil oppression, rather than their religious wrongs. It is still so, and political reform looks only on the surface and never takes into account the root of difficulties. Had Solomon kept true to God the people would not have been oppressed; but they were blinded to this because they partook of his sins. They, too, loved the heathen worship and only murmured at its cost.

And yet there was an overruling cause why Rehoboam hearkened to the younger men, for God had intended to inflict punishment (v. 15).

Rehoboam seems to have been incredulous as to the reality of the revolt; but if so, what event opened his eyes (v. 18)? What action is now taken by him (v. 21), and why is it brought to a standstill (vv. 23-25).

JEROBOAM'S FOLLY (12:26-33)

To build Shechem and Penuel meant probably to fortify them as protection from attack (v. 25).

Had Jeroboam ground for thinking as is recorded in verses 26-27? (Compare 11:37-38.) He had become familiar with calf worship in Egypt (v. 28), but in any event Solomon had prepared the people thus to be led astray.

Notice that it was for political reasons Jeroboam did this (v. 27). He had no intention of throwing off the yoke of Jehovah altogether, but was foolish enough to think He could be worshipped in one way as well as another. Why was he compelled to make priests "from among all the people"? (Compare again ^{<4112>}2 Chronicles 11:12-13.) What change did he

make as to the time of the feast of tabernacles? (Compare verse 32 with ~~1233~~Leviticus 23:33-34.) Where did he get the idea (v. 33)?

A PRELIMINARY WARNING (CHAP. 13)

The story of this chapter, although containing supernatural wonders, is in the recital and meaning very plain. Jeroboam has his chance to repent and turn to the Lord if he will, but his heart is set to do evil.

No one knows the name of the prophet (v. 1) who, although a "man of God," acted so unworthily as to be denied the honor of its record. Note the prophecy he uttered and compare its fulfillment, over three hundred years later, in ~~1235~~2 Kings 23:15-16. This has been cited as one of the most remarkable prophecies in Holy Writ, "whose definiteness and minuteness stand in marked contrast to the obscure oracles of the heathen." What sign was given to its ultimate fulfillment (v. 3)? What personal judgment fell on the king and why (v. 4)? Do you think he was genuine in his invitation (v. 7)?

And the prophet referred to in the subsequent verses, if he were ever a servant of the Lord, surely he was a castaway now (~~4197~~1 Corinthians 9:27). What a warning his conduct brings before Christian workers today! Could his motive have been to curry favor with the King? How many supernatural events can be counted in verses 20-29? (Compare ~~1235~~2 Kings 23:15-18.)

A FINAL JUDGMENT (14:1-20)

Taking verses 1 and 2 together, how do they reveal Jeroboam's hypocrisy, political caution, fear and ignorance?

The Lord's commendation of David as contrasted with Jeroboam (v. 8) is to be considered in the light of the pure worship the former maintained in accordance with the divine law. It does not mean that David never sinned, although, of course, even in that he differed from Jeroboam because he repented of his sin. The phrase in verse 10 refers to "a man child" and is so rendered in the Revised Version.

What "good" was found in Abijah (v. 13) is not stated, but doubtless he was not in sympathy with all his father's wickedness and idolatry.

Note the earliest prediction of the captivity of Israel by the Assyrians as it subsequently came to pass (v. 15 compared with ~~1276~~2 Kings 17:6).

REHOBAM'S INIQUITY AND ITS RESULT (14:21-31)

What allusion (v. 21) furnishes a hint to the reason of Rehoboam's apostasy (vv. 22-24)? What judgment falls on him and his people (vv. 25-26)?

We should not misunderstand "the book of the chronicles" (v. 29), as meaning the book of the Old Testament bearing that name, but only one of the customary records of the kings. Neither should we imagine verse 30 to be a contradiction of chapter 12:21-24, as the former (v. 30) may refer to skirmishes in contrast with an aggressive war of conquest.

QUESTIONS

1. were the people of Israel any more religious and God-fearing than their first king?
2. Rehearse the story of God's relation to the division of the kingdom.
3. Did Jeroboam outwardly break the first or second commandment?
4. What king of Judah was named by the Lord over three hundred years before his birth?
5. Quote ~~41927~~ 1 Corinthians 9:27.

1 KINGS 15-16 — ASA TO AHAB

ABIJAM'S BRIEF REIGN IN JUDAH (15:1-8)

This commentary will permit but the briefest treatment of the less important reigns of Judah and Israel, that more attention may be given to the others.

"Abijam" is called "Abijah" in ~~41216~~ 2 Chronicles 12:16.

Verse 5, referring to David, is to be taken in the comparative sense spoken of in the lesson preceding.

Verse 6 is a mistake, as some copies of the text read "Abijam" for "Rehoboam."

Since Abijam began to reign in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam (v. 1), and was succeeded by Asa in the twentieth (v. 9), how could it be that he reigned three years (v. 2)? The answer is that parts of years among the Hebrews were counted as whole years.

ASA'S LONG REIGN (15: 9-24)

It would appear by comparing verse 10 with verse 2 that "Maachah" was really the grandmother of this king who, for some reason, is named instead of his immediate ancestress. She seems to have been the queen dowager (v. 13).

Asa's character, good in the main (vv. 11-15), suffers a decline later as indicated in his alliance with Benhadad of Syria against Baasha of Israel (vv. 17-21). Why not trust God instead? Had the lessons of the past been lost upon him?

The student is reminded of the necessity of studying the history of these kings in the light of 2 Chronicles. Much interest is added to the story of Asa by the parallel places in chapters 14-16 of that book.

NADAB'S BRIEF REIGN (15:25-31)

There is little said of this king, but verses 27-30 should be noted as a fulfillment of the prediction of chapter 14:10-11.

BAASHA'S LONG REIGN (15:32-16:6)

Note the name of the prophet here (16:1), who must not be confused with a king of the same name who appears subsequently. Note that God exalted Baasha over Israel (v. 2), though from the human side he appeared to take the kingdom by his own force. Note that God still calls Israel His "people" (v. 2), though they have dealt so wickedly towards Him. There were still faithful worshippers among them, and He is still sending prophets to them and working miracles on their behalf. Oh, the long-suffering of God! Note finally, that, although God had decreed the death of Jeroboam's house, He had not authorized Baasha as His executive, and hence the latter is punished for murder (v. 7).

ZIMRI THE SUICIDE (16:8-20)

of Elah, the immediate successor of Baasha, nothing need be said except that his death begins to fulfill the prediction of verse 3 which culminated as recorded in verses 12-13. It was a time of revelry and bloodshed; the army, as is usual in such periods, dictated its own terms (v. 16).

OMRI AND THE NEW CAPITAL (16:21-28)

After four years of civil war Omri is established on the throne and, the royal residence at Tirzah having been destroyed by fire, he selects Samaria for a new capital (v. 24). Observe why it was called by that name. Dean Stanley speaks of the admirable position of this city as paralleled nowhere in the country for "strength, beauty and fertility." Locate it on the map.

THE WICKED AHAB (16:29-34)

Note the iniquitous distinction of this man (v. 30). If Jeroboam broke the second commandment which forbade manmade images, Ahab went further and broke the rest by throwing off even the outward semblance of worshipping Jehovah (v. 31).

The beginning of his gross offense was his marriage. Ethbaal, the father of Jezebel, was originally the priest of the heathen goddess Ashtaroth, or Astarte, whose worship was loathsome in its licentiousness. By murdering the king of the Zidonians (Tyre) he seized the throne and thus became a successor of the noted Hiram.

The worship of Baal and of Astarte were practically one and the same, Baal representing the male principle in the cult and Astarte the female.

In reading verse 31 refresh the mind by a reference to the curse against Jericho in ^{<0036>}Judges 6:26. Jericho is referred to prior to this time, i.e., in David's day (^{<0035>}2 Samuel 10:5), as though it were inhabited, which makes these verses the more difficult to understand. But some think that the curse of Joshua referred not so much to dwelling in the city as to the rebuilding of its walls for defense.

QUESTIONS

1. How did the Hebrews sometimes count years?
2. What book should be read in connection with 2 Kings?

3. How does this lesson show God's patience towards Israel?
4. What city had been the capital of Israel prior to Omri's time?
5. How did Ahab's wickedness exceed that of Jeroboam?
6. What was the relation between the worship of Baal and of Ashtaroth?
7. Tell the story of the cursing of Jericho by Joshua.

1 KINGS 17-19 — ELIJAH AND AHAB

ELIJAH IN HIDING (17:1-24)

Nothing is known of Elijah's previous history, not even why he is called the Tishbite (v. 1) except, as suggested in the Septuagint translation, that the town of Tishbeh is meant, which was in the Gilead region east of the Jordan. A comparison of ^{<51116>}Deuteronomy 11:16-17 shows that the judgment he announces (v. 1) was threatened by Jehovah for such iniquity as that now prevailing; but of course the divine impulse must have come upon him to apply it in this instance.

His hiding "by the brook Cherith" (v. 3) was necessary to preserve him from the wrath of Ahab when his words were fulfilled. His being fed by "the ravens" (v. 4) will raise no question in the minds of any who accept the supernatural in the Bible, and for those who do not this commentary can have little value. The theory of some that the Hebrew word translated "ravens" might be rendered "Arabians," and that he was normally provided for by passing merchants of that region, is not generally accepted by evangelical scholars and would be only less a miracle than the accepted text.

Zarephath, or Sarepta, was in the country whence Jezebel had come, and which was visited by the famine also. The cause for Elijah's removal there is stated in verses 7-9, but there was a deeper reason in the new testings that were to come to him for the strengthening of his faith in view of the climax later on. Nevertheless, we are not to forget the lesson God had to teach the widow also, and to us through her. See Christ's testimony in ^{<4025>}Luke 4:25-26.

MEETING WITH AHAB (18:1-46)

"The third year" is spoken of here, while ^{^{36:17} James 5:17 says "three years and six months," a discrepancy which may be explained by saying that the drought had been experienced six months (the time between the early and latter rains in March and October respectively) before Ahab realized the situation and became incensed against the prophet.}

Fire was the element over which Baal was supposed to preside, which explains verse 24. Observe the simplicity and faith of Elijah's prayer (vv. 36-37). His command (v. 40) was justified as a magistrate of God (^{^{36:18} Deuteronomy 13:5 and 18:20).}

Description of Matthew Carmel

The natural features of Matthew Carmel exactly correspond with the details of this narrative. The conspicuous summit, 1,635 feet above the sea, presents an esplanade spacious enough for the king and the priests of Baal to stand on the one side, and Elijah on the other.

It is a rocky soil, on which there is abundance of loose stones to furnish the twelve of which the altar was built — a bed of thick earth in which a trench could be dug; and yet the earth not so loose that the water poured into it would be absorbed.

Two hundred and fifty feet beneath the plateau there is a perennial fountain which might not have been accessible to the people, and whence, therefore, even in that season of drought, Elijah could procure those supplies of water which he poured over the altar.

The distance between this spring and the site of the altar is so short as to make it perfectly possible to go thrice thither and back again: whereas, it must have been impossible once in an afternoon, to fetch water from the sea.

The summit is one thousand feet above the Kishon, which nowhere runs from the sea so close to the base of the mount as just beneath EI-Mohhraka; so that the priests of Baal could, in a few minutes, be taken down "to the brook and slain there." — Jamieson, Faussett and Brown.

THE RESULTS FOLLOWING (19:1-21)

There seems to be no explanation of Elijah's flight (vv. 1-4) except the natural one of great depression following great spiritual exaltation. God could have preserved him from this had He so willed, but it is good for all of us to know that we are but flesh (^{<5167>}James 5:17) and "that we have this treasure in earthen vessels" (^{<4047>}2 Corinthians 4:7).

We are impressed with the condescension of God in the supernatural provision for Elijah's physical needs of which he himself had thought nothing (vv. 5-8); and the no less condescension in instructing and continuing to use him as indicated in the subsequent verses.

The exhibition of divine power (vv. 11-13) had the effect of restoring the prophet to a spiritual equilibrium where he could listen to further commands (vv. 15-17) and receive the rebuke his conduct merited (v. 18). It is notable that the three persons he is to anoint are all to be employed, though in different ways, as God's instruments of judgment upon idolatrous Israel. The seven thousand mentioned is not to be taken literally, but as meaning a certain complete number of faithful ones of whom God was cognizant though the prophet was not.

Elisha was one of these (v. 19) who had doubtless been educated in the schools of the prophets of which we shall hear more, and who recognized the falling of his master's mantle upon him as his divine call.

When Elijah says, "What have I done to thee" (v. 20), he seems to mean: "Do not disregard it. Bid thy loved ones farewell, but remain faithful to thy call."

QUESTIONS

1. Have you read ^{<5116>}Deuteronomy 11:16-17?
2. Have you located Zarephath?
3. Can you give the context of ^{<4025>}Luke 4:25-26?
4. Can you quote Elijah's prayer on Matthew Carmel?
5. Name seven particulars in which the natural features of Matthew Carmel correspond with this narrative.
6. How shall we explain God's acting towards Elijah at Horeb?
7. How do you explain the remnant of seven thousand?

8. How does verse 15 show God's power over heathen nations as well as Israel?

1 KINGS 20-22 — CLOSE OF AHAB'S REIGN

HIS DEALING WITH BEN-HADAD (CHAP. 20)

Among the remarkable chapters of this book the present stands out distinctively, but we shall be unable to give it the consideration it should have if we forget God's purpose in dealing with Israel. It has been reiterated that He is using that people as an instrument in the redemption of mankind, and especially as a witness to Himself before the nations. This explains everything in their history, and to ignore it is to make that history like a tale of the Arabian nights. We should remember also that what is written is oftentimes the barest outline of what was said and done, and while we are by no means to fill in what we please, yet the omissions should have a qualifying influence in our understanding of the record.

Ben-hadad means the son of Hadad, and is a general title for the kings of Syria of that period, like the Pharaohs of Egypt or the Caesars of Rome. He was a descendant of the king met with in Baasha's reign (15:20). The thirty-two kings with him (v. 1) were petty tributary princes, rulers over cities in his neighborhood.

His claim for tribute (v. 3) would have been acceded to had he not overreached himself (vv. 5-6), and had not frightened Ahab been encouraged by his subjects (vv. 7-11).

What an evidence we have of God's goodness and providential purpose in Israel in verse 13! Wine and panic explain the victory from the human side, but God's interposition from the divine side (vv. 19-21).

If this victory was great, that of the succeeding year was greater (vv. 22-30). Note the relative size of the walls under the weight of those who there made a stand against Israel.

Ahab's clemency to Ben-hadad (vv. 31-34) was repetition of Saul's disloyalty to God in the case of Agag (~~1~~1 Samuel 15) and explains the circumstance following (vv. 35-43). The parabolic manner of the prophet

in announcing Ahab's judgment suggests Nathan's dealing with David (~~1011~~2 Samuel 12).

HIS DEALINGS WITH NABOTH (CHAP. 21)

Note that Naboth's refusal to Ahab was not disregard for him, nor for selfish reasons, but from obedience to God. (Compare verse 3 with ~~1023~~Leviticus 25:23, ~~1047~~Numbers 36:78.) Sons of Belial (v. 10) means "ungodly men."

For the fulfillment of verse 19 compare the next chapter, verses 37-38. The phrase, "sold thyself to work evil" means that he allowed evil to get the mastery over him. (Compare ~~1071~~Romans 7:11.) For the fulfillment of verse 23, compare ~~1100~~2 Kings 9:30-37. Note God's mercy to the penitent (vv. 27-29) and compare ~~1102~~2 Kings 9:21-26.

HIS DEALINGS WITH JEHOSEPHAT (CHAP. 22)

Verse 3 indicates that Ben-hadad had not fulfilled the covenant with Ahab he had been so ready to make (compare 20:34).

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, has not been met with before, but a history of his reign is reported in the concluding verses of the chapter. He makes a striking Old Testament type of the New Testament Christian who forms entangling alliances with the world, but more is said concerning him in 2 Chronicles 18.

Note the piety of Jehoshaphat (v. 5), and observe that a good man is sometimes found voluntarily in bad company.

Micaiah (v. 9) was in prison because of his faithful testimony to God against Ahab. Zedekiah was one of the false prophets (v. 11), but what worship he represented, now that Baalism had been discredited, is difficult to say; but certainly not that of Jehovah.

Observe the temptation placed before Micaiah and the manner in which he met it (vv. 13-14). His words in verse 15 are ironical, but those of verse 17 are a prediction of the defeat that followed. It is he who speaks in verses 19-23, for a commentary on which see ~~1090~~1 Samuel 18, and also the first two chapters of Job. With verses 24-25 compare ~~1040~~Jeremiah 20:1-6.

Observe that Jehoshaphat's "unholy alliance" nearly cost him his life (vv. 30-33), but it taught him a lesson (v. 49).

QUESTIONS

1. In what light are we to interpret the marvelous transactions in this book?
2. Who was Ben-hadad?
3. How does this lesson illustrate the cowardice and the courage of Ahab?
4. How does it illustrate the goodness and mercy of God?
5. How many of the marginal references have you examined?
6. What is the meaning of "sons of Belial"?
7. Of what is Jehoshaphat a type, and why?
8. With what prophet may Micaiah be compared?